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The responsibility of the church to rural youth in the changing rural environment and activities in which the church becomes involved to fulfill its responsibility are presented in this document. The primary responsibility of the church to rural youth is to communicate its religious message and thus aid youth in making personal decisions. To aid in fulfilling its responsibility the church sponsors study conferences, conducts consultations and research, and utilizes the findings of social scientists. The church applies facts and insights through local congregations and parishes and strengthens community institutions. (SW)

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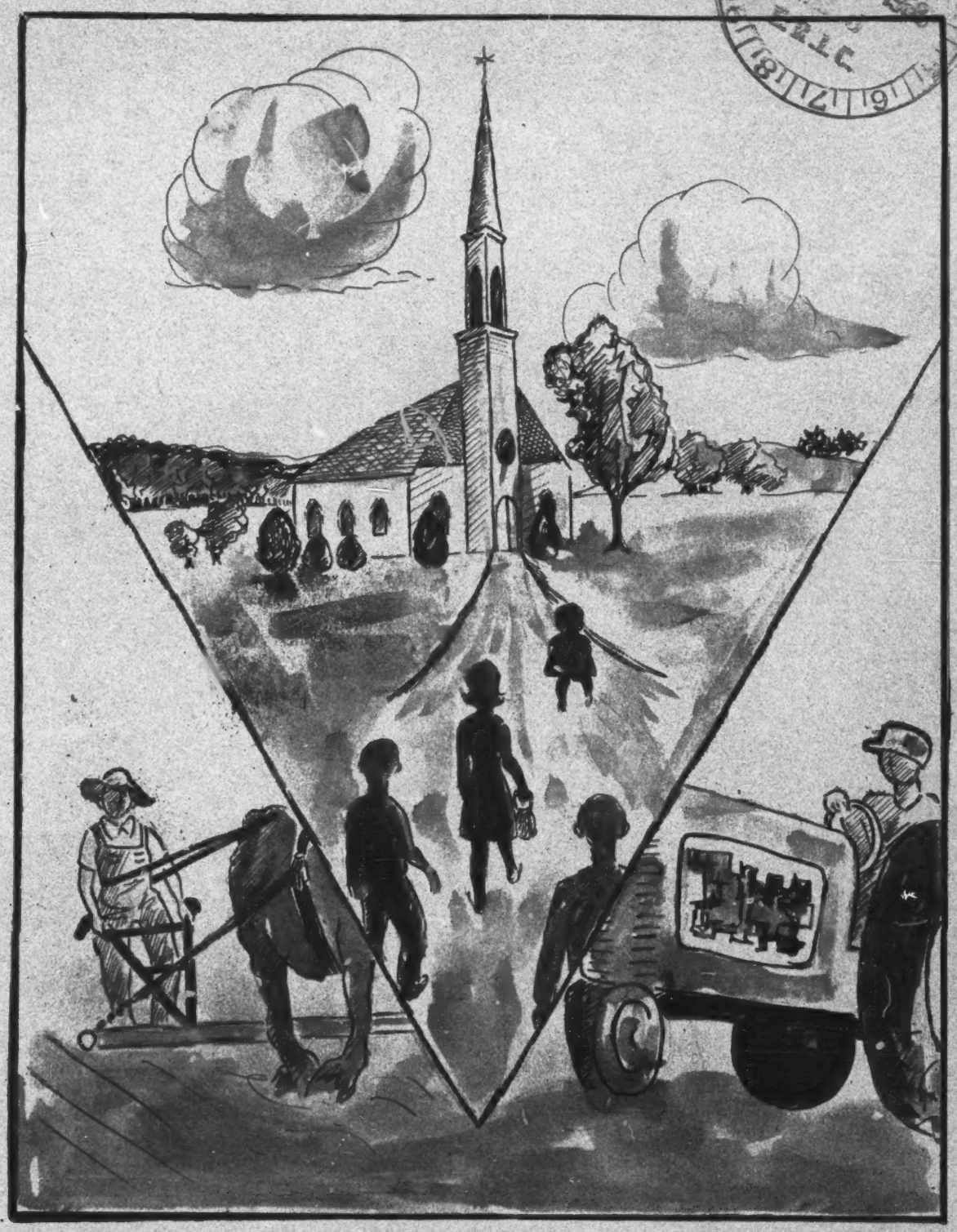

The Church and Rural Youth

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FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH IN SERVING

RURAL YOUTH IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

by

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Prepared by

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in a Changing Environment

September 1963

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ABSTRACT

FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH IN SERVING
RURAL YOUTH IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

by

E. W. Mueller

The church is represented in the thousands of communities of rural America through local congregations. Consequently, the church is in a close physical relationship to rural youth who are choosing values by which to live.

The primary responsibility of the church to rural youth in the changing environment is to be itself and to communicate its message to them. On the basis of the religious message youth may make individual vows as a basis for personal decision making. The church asks divine guidance for youth through intercessory prayer.

The changing rural environment arises from a complex set of interrelated and interdependent factors which cannot be adequately understood by the church without help. Therefore, the church sponsors study conferences and receives the analyses, facts, and insights of social scientists.

Communication processes are employed by the church in order that information and insights from the social scientists may be of help to congregations as they serve rural youth. Consultations and research are conducted by church bodies to provide information to develop and to guide youth programs.

Rural youth are a part of the community in which they live. The church undergirds the community, thereby contributing to the development of youth.

FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH IN SERVING RURAL YOUTH IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

Our assignment causes us to focus upon the functions of the church in rural society. Our special concern is to help youth to deal forthrightly with the changing environment of our nation's countryside.

The church is present in the thousands of rural communities of our nation through one or more local congregations. The community may be an open country neighborhood, a village, a small town or a business center, serving a large trade area with agricultural and non-agricultural interests. The church is in a good position to relate to rural youth in the changing environment.

The period of youth is the apprenticeship for adult life. Youth serve this apprenticeship in their local community. They need help to develop a wholesome attitude and relationship to work and vocation, to marriage and family, and to community and nation. They need guidance and counsel to rise above self-centeredness which destroys community life. They need to acquire a readiness to help others find fulfillment.

When community life is in flux beliefs and values undergo a testing. It becomes difficult to distinguish the essentials of life from the non-essentials. Youth are confronted with basic questions. Which values have worth? Which are to be kept? Which are to be discarded? How does one bring them together and balance them in order to build a meaningful life?

THE CHURCH SEEKS TO BE ITSELF

In the changing rural environment what is the rural church doing to help youth find a meaningful life? In its responsibility to rural youth the chief function of the church lies in being the church to them. Youth need the church. An analogy may be helpful at this point. A father can be a pal, a teacher or a good guy to his son. But for the father who concentrates on being a pal his son will have another pal but he may not have a father in the real sense of the word. What a son needs most is a father. The church can and does provide a lot of things for youth--special activities, a place to meet, recreational programs, etc. These things have worth and, as necessary, the church may provide them. However, these secondary factors must not be permitted to detract from the primary responsibility of the church to youth. What the individual needs most is the church.

COMMUNICATION OF INVARIABLES

The church seeks to be the church to young people in rural areas in the real sense of the word. The church is responsible to communicate the message which has been entrusted to it so that faith may be born and nurtured. The voice of the church must be to the young people today what the voice of Moses was to the Israelites when he spoke to them in the wilderness. "All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty

years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth many live." (Deuteronomy 8:1-3.)

People need to know their Creator and their Redeemer as well as the responsibility they have to Him and to their fellowmen. Therefore, the church's primary role is communication. It confronts mankind with the reality that there are invariables in life. It teaches that God is the Creator and man remains the creature; that God is the Redeemer and man remains in need of redemption; that man is neighbor to his fellow man and all social institutions and human activities, no matter how complex, remain under the judgement of God.

Youth need to see the church in relationship to the social community. Through word and deed the church seeks to manifest and to demonstrate its relation and responsibility to people in communities. It must uphold and cultivate the values derived from the faith that it teaches and invite its members to be guided by them in all their decision-making.

IMPORTANCE OF VOW-MAKING AND INTERCESSORY PRAYER

To make its dutiful contribution to rural youth in a changing environment the church seeks to confront the individual with a call to the biblical faith. In this action the call for religious dedication and vow-making is of central importance to the individual. Without religious dedication or vow-making there is little foundation for a self-governed life and personal growth.

Herbert H. Farmer, in his book, The Healing Cross, (published by Charles Scribner's Sons) cites the significance and purpose of the religious vow. "It is perhaps one of the disquieting features of modern times that so many people pass through life without ever being called upon to make a really solemn and serious vow. In earlier times we were told a man's life was full of occasions for vow-taking. At the attainment of manhood, at marriage, at the birth of a child, at each religious festival in the year, at every deliverance from danger or unexpected blessing, at entry into a profession or a trade-guild, a man was expected to acknowledge God and make a vow. To-day that is no longer so, and it is possible for countless people to pass through life without making a serious vow at all. . . .

"It is a pity, for, rightly understood, in the making and keeping of vows there is focused the central problem of man's inner life and therefore most of the problems of his outer life as well. The making of a vow is a man's serious attempt to govern himself. The true vow is the attempt to capture the high and serious moment, to take it out of the transiencies and make it one of the permanencies of the soul's life, to condense out of the vapour of feeling a solid mass and mementum of directed will."

A way in which the church reveals its character and concern for youth is through the intercessory prayer in their behalf. Intercessory prayer is a corporate act of the church at worship. The church recognizes the need for divine guidance and requests that God grant guidance and inner strength to youth.

RELIGION AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

Concern that religion fulfill its primary function in our society is given expression in a recent symposium, sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, on "Religious Responsibility for the Social Order." In dealing with this subject Rabbi Emil L. Fackenheim says, ". . . I must begin by opposing all attempts to tear asunder what the prophetic affirmation joined together; that is, on the one hand, a secularism which bids religion to mind its business, of which responsibility for the social order is to be no part, and, on the other hand, an other-worldly religon which, accepting this advice, disclaims all responsibility for the social order."1/

Religious bodies seek to relate to the changing social order in rural areas of the nation. However, caution needs to be exercised that the church is not cast out of its true role into that of being a tool in the hands of the social order. The Roman Catholic spokesman, Gustave Weigel, S. J., spoke to this point in the symposium, by affirming, "We must not enlist the church, a community of believers, in a campaign to save the secular society or enhance its power. This the church cannot do. As men interested in the secular good of our secular society, we must see that all we can do is urge the church to be genuinely herself. When she is that, by way of by-product, good will adhere to the secular society in which the church is only a lodger."2/

In order to help rural youth to cope with the changing environment the church is concerned with beliefs and values. Where the church fails this task, or where people turn away form the church, faith languishes and values grow stale.

Professor Jaroslav Pelikan, the Protestant theologian at the symposium, warns, ". . .I think it is necessary to point out that the heritage of values bequeathed to us by Judaism and Christianity is being spent but not replenished, because the faith upon which those values were based no longer animates many of those who profess the values.

"When as now, however, the crisis of history puts a system of morality to the test, then such an individual or a culture discovers, often too late, that moral values do not come equipped with a 'self-starter' but that they depend for their propulsion upon sources of power beyond themselves and beyond their own culture. In each succeeding crisis -- since the Babylonian captivity of Israel -- the prophets of religion have issued just that warning. The effectiveness of the warning is not necessarily proportionate to its validity. The future of moral and spiritual life in America may well depend upon which of these two conclusions shapes the thinking and teaching of this and the next generation. Can morals be separated from the teaching of the book where they are recorded? Can the book be separated from the people of God where it arises? Neither churches nor schools nor agencies like this can finally avoid a confrontation with the question of the relation between the Book of God and the People of God."3/

THE CHURCH STUDIES REALITIES OF SOCIETY

The study of factual changes in the American rural society is a basic approach of the church toward understanding people with whom it seeks to communicate. Rural youth live and grow in the existing situation. By becoming conversant with rural society as it is, rather than relying on what it seems to

be, the church prepares itself for its task. As congregations in the local communities and youth offices on a national level become familiar with the socio-economic environment, they are in a position to develop youth programs to meet the existing needs.

DEPEND ON SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

The church is dependent upon the social scientists for knowledge and insights concerning the realities of society. To express dependence is in itself the facing of a reality. The church does not presume to have the capability nor the desire to conduct the study and research essential for developing an adequate independent understanding of the social order. In study conferences social scientists are asked to present background papers. They sometimes express pleasant surprise in discovering that church leaders and pastors are good listeners.

Study of the realities of rural society on the part of the church received major encouragement over a half century ago. The Commission on Country Life, appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908, sowed a good seed. The contributions, conditions, deficiencies, needs and underlying problems of American agriculture and rural life of that time were brought into focus by the report of the Commission. A section of the report deals with "The Country Church." Part of the opening paragraph of that section of the report has significance here.

"This Commission has no desire to give advice to the institutions of religion nor to attempt to dictate their policies. Yet any consideration of the problem of rural life that leaves out of account the function and possibilities of the church, and of related institutions, would be grossly inadequate. This is not only because in the last analysis the country life problem is a moral problem, or that in the best development of the individual, the great motives and results are religious and spiritual, but because from the pure sociological point of view the church is fundamentally a necessary institution in country life. In a peculiar way the church is intimately related to the agriculatural industry. The work and the life of the farm are closely bound together, and the institutions of the country react on that life and on one another more intimately than they do in the city. This gives the rural church a position of peculiar difficulty and one of unequalled opportunity."4/

What the Report of the Commission on Country Life said was taken seriously by church bodies. The Report of the Commission constitutes a benchmark for the church in facing the realities of a changing rural environment. It provided an opportunity for the church to listen and to learn. The church did learn for in the ensuing years every major denomination established a department or an office to study and to discover how better to serve people in rural America, not the least of which are rural youth. Such departments and offices recognized the importance of study and communication and generally employ these means.

STUDY CONFERENCES EMPLOYED

Study conferences and workshops have been and are being sponsored by the church at the local, state, regional and national levels. Economists, political scientists, sociologists, and other social scientists from both public and private institutions serve as resource speakers. It is extremely difficult to find a report of a church-sponsored study conference which does nor have a paper by one

or more social scientists. They present facts about the changing rural environment, and the implication of such facts for rural people, including youth.

While such study events by the church began years ago, they are more widely used today. For example, on August 27-29, the United Church of Christ held its second quadrennial Town and Country Convocation in Ohio to develop insights on the "Church and Cultural Crisis." On July 9-12, the Methodist Church held its fifth quadrennial National Methodist Conference on the Church in Town and Country at the University of Minnesota. Socio-economic trends in 12 types of rural communities were studied.

The National Catholic Rural Life Conference coordinates study conferences as an important part of its ongoing program. Workshops at the various levels are continually in process through the initiation of the church in town and country departments of other denominations. Participation in such study conferences, or examination of their reports, reveals extensive and serious study of the changing rural environment.

The church is grateful to other agencies, committees, institutions, and societies that invite church leaders into study conferences which they sponsor: to wit, the attendance of churchmen at the "National Conference on the Problems of Rural Youth in a Changing Environment." The events by other groups on rural life and youth to which church leaders are invited are too numerous to mention. But citing some of the sponsoring, inviting groups may give an idea of how extensive these events are which church leaders have been privileged to attend during the recent decades: American Country Life Association; American Medical Association; Consumers Cooperative Association; Department of Rural Education, National Education Association; Federal and Cooperative Extension Service; 4-H; the national farm organizations; National Association of Manufacturers; National Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Rural Youth of the United States of America; and others.

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PASTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Continuing education conferences and schools at land-grant colleges and universities for pastors and laymen in rual areas make a major contribution to the study and understanding of the changing rural society. "Working relationships between land-grant universities and churches for betterment of town and country communities go back more than 50 years."5/ The Farm Foundation has aided and encouraged this effort through the years.

During the past seven years these relationships have been clarified and expanded. These actions have come about by the efforts of a liaison person in the Federal Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture and by a national Committee on Continuing Education for Town and Country Pastors at Land-Grant Universities. The liaison office is titled, Program Relationships. Phillip F. Aylesworth is the USDA staff person in this position. The Committee is made up of representatives of the Extension Committee on Organiation and Policy, Cooperative Extension Service, major church groups, the Farm Foundation, and private citizens.

The continuing education schools at land-grant universities are designed to meet the informational and study needs for people whose responsibilities reside at the parish or community level. These conferences and schools are

designed to share information with all denominations. Facts are non-denominational. Content of continuing education schools sometimes includes rural youth as a subject area, however, the analysis of rural society always has implications for the church in relation to youth.

The national Committee on Continuing Education for Town and Country Pastors at Land-Grant Universities has taken steps to initiate a series of study events termed State of Society Conferences for church administrators at the state and regional level. Here again, these study conferences are planned for administrators of all denominations. Rural youth and the changing rual environment are subjects planned for presentations and discussions in the State of Society Conferences.

THE MAGNIFICENT DECLINE SOUGHT

Study processes are helpful to the church in promoting what we term the magnificent decline of churches in rural areas. The magnificence of this decline we regard important in ministering to rural youth. The decline of which we speak is in numbers of congregations. The magnificence of which we speak is that of fewer but stronger congregations.

Problems of overlapping parish boundaries and the duplication of work by congregations are realities the church is facing in rural America. Solutions are sought by church bodies where they have these problems. Parenthetically we may report that we are encouraged by progress but hasten to add that these problems will be around a long time.

Communities and congregations were developed when transportation was mainly on foot and by horse power. Congregations (and communities) were established so as to be relatively close to people. With automobiles and hard surfaced highways more congregations exist than are needed. Put another way, if congregations were to be established on the basis of today's technology there would be fewer of them. And these would be located in such a way as to serve a larger population base.

Overchurching constitutes a problem in ministering to rural youth in a changing environment. Evidence appears to indicate that more youth are better served by the church when youth have associations with relatively larger numbers of their peers. The merger of congregations and the realignment of parishes seems to be a workable solution in providing adequate bases for the type of parish ministry required by youth and other age groups in present-day town and country areas.

To help people in congregations become more familiar with change and the implications of change church leaders help them gather and share factual information so that their decisions may be made on the basis of facts and the basic mission of the church rather than on opinion and sentiment. Study processes used to solve overchurching include: social and economic data, spatial distribution of church membership, and factors in church organization which tend to impede reorganization.

THE CHURCH COMMUNICATES INFORMATION AND INSIGHTS

In appraising the conference of what church bodies are doing to help meet the needs of rural youth in a changing environment a survey was made to

supplement and/or to correct general knowledge of church service to rural youth. The survey consisted of a five-page questionnaire sent to national youth leaders and to national church in town and country leaders.

Responses to the questionnaire bear out an underlying assumption of this paper, namely, that the churches are seeking to meet the needs and problems of rural youth through two primary channels. First, in serving rural youth, church bodies rely on the basic unit of the church, the local congregation or parish. Secondly, the specific needs and problems of rural youth are included in the national programs designed for all the youth of the church bodies.

Church bodies seek to meet the needs and deal with problems of rural youth through local congregations and through their national youth programs. This approach has the merit of wholeness. It is psychologically and structurally superior to a special program for rural youth which would set them apart from other church youth. However, a strength may become a weakness if the well-being of a segment of the church is neglected.

MEANS OF APPLYING INSIGHTS

What the church has learned and is learning, both at the study conferences it sponsors and at those sponsored by other groups, it seeks to apply through its basic units, the local congregations and parishes. Applications are possible when the insights are communicated. Several means of communication are used. Parish pastors and laymen are participants in the study conference. Conference reports are widely distributed. Audio-visuals, such as filmstrips and movies, are harnessed. Articles and feature stories are published in both special interest and general church publications. Publications of the agencies, committees, institutions and societies are publicized and distributed. And the spoken word is not infrequently used by church leaders in calling attention to rural change and problems of rural youth.

DEPARTMENTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

From the survey we would conclude that the concern for rural youth is not neglected. Youth departments of church bodies address themselves to the needs and problems of rural youth as a part of their assignment. Most church bodies have one or more full-time professional youth leaders. Some church bodies have youth offices served by part-time youth leaders.

Responses to the survey indicate that all major church bodies have staff writers who communicate information on rural society and the needs and problems of rural youth through general-church and special-audience publications. The Methodist Church has a church-school curriculum, for the small churches (which are mostly rural) which is directed to the rural scene. The Methodist Church's 1960 mission study units for all age groups of their constituent congregations incorporates studies of rural life. The National Catholic Rural Life Conference has produced (within the last five years) three publications which concern rural youth, "Which Way--Farm Youth?" "Start Where You Are," "Developing Rural Resources."

The United Church of Christ has recently published "The New Day in Town and Country" and "The Town and Country Ministry Considered Regionally." The United Presbyterian Church in the USA has published two manuscripts, "The Golden Harvest"

and "Orientation to the Town and Country Church." The Southern Baptist Convention communicates the needs and the problems of rural youth through its church school curriculum. Other church bodies, namely, The Church of God, Evangelical United Brethren, Protestant Episcopal and Lutheran have recent books and pamphlets on similar subject areas.

The major magazines of most church bodies occasionally present informative and interpretive articles concerning the changing rural environment. Public media sometimes tends to present a negative image of rural life to people in our urbanized society. Sometimes articles by church in town and country leaders may have a smattering of rural sentimentalism. This has been largely overcome through the objective information presented by social scientists at study conferences and workshops. A concern we might lift up at this point is the need for more articles which present information systematically and in depth to the readership of the major church body magazines.

The church college and university is a resource on the American scene. The colleges and/or universities of church bodies serve rural youth in a significant measure. It would be interesting to discover how many of the people at this conference were once rural youth who have been served by one or more church colleges or universities. In addition to their ongoing academic programs these institutions contribute studies, resource persons, extension service and experimentation which contribute to a more adequate service to rural youth. Perhaps these institutions can be looked to for an increasing contribution in the years ahead in view of such problems as school dropouts, unemployment of rural youth, community development, changing family patterns, etc.

SPECIAL CONSULTATION AND RESEARCH

Two special studies by church bodies merit an introduction to this conference. They are (1) the report of the Older Youth--Young Adult Team of the [illegible] Methodist Church, and, (2) Lutheran Youth Research.

The Methodist Church established its team to "study, explore, experiment, and develop" a new approach in the ministry "to older youth--young adults." Five staff members representing student, youth, and adult work in the three divisions of the General Board of Education were assigned work on this problem during 1961.

As a partial result of the work five reports have been published on various aspects of older youth--young adult work:

1. Combined Report of Two Young Adult Consultations by Roy Larson and Charles Mowry--Some thinking about the young adult and the church.

2. Toward Understanding Older Youth--Young Adults by Allen J. Moore--A study of contemporary literature and theory about these persons.

3. A Local Church Survey of Older Youth--Young Adult Groups by Lewis E. Durham--Done in six annual conferences.

4. Toward a Ministry Among Older Youth--Young Adults by Charles E. Mowry--What is the church doing and what can it do?

5. A Ministry to Business, Trade and Technical School Students--A Report of a Consultation by Edgar A. Gossard.

These studies point toward the recognition of the urbanization of society and the need for preparing youth in rural areas for citizenship and occupations in urban environments.

Lutheran Youth Research is a four-year study (1958 to 1962) of 2,000 Lutheran high school youth. An advisory board of qualified research consultants reviewed each step in the development of the study to assure its validity by careful attention to standards of psychological and sociolgoical research. Reasons for making the study are: to develop sound plans for youth work; to appraise the church's ministry to youth; tp provide reliable information as to the unmet needs of children and youth; and to provide an adequate basis for evaluating changes effected by new approaches to youth.

No attempt is made in this paper to present summary information of the research. But some quotations from some of the subject areas of the study may be helpful for purposes of the ensuing discussion. "The most significant difference between rural and urban youth (in relation to church activities)lies in frequency of church attendance. Urban youth attend more frequently."6/ Rural youth "are more trobled in all areas of concern and are also more eager for help than is true of urban youth."7/

In the relationship of the congregation and youth it was noted that where youth are most troubled adults are least aware of it, and conversely where adults are most concerned youth are least troubled. "Rural pastors scored consistently lower on all scales (less concern) than urban pastors, whereas rural youth scored consistently higher (more concern) than urban youth. This is especially interesting in the light of the fact that rural lay adults scored the same as urban lay adults."8/

THE CHURCH UNDERGIRDS COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

God's concern for individuals indicates the scope of concern which the church is to have for all people and human institutions. Rather than develop competing institutions the church seeks to undergird the institutions which serve the community. For example, the church assists community efforts for a hospital and health service rather than developing its own. Then it concentrates on bringing its ministry to the patients. Rural youth are served by the community institutions which the church undergirds through its encouragement and the participation and leadership of its members.

THE FAMILY

The church helps rural youth through its efforts to assist in the development of strong families. Numerous church-sponsored study conferences have been held toward strengthening families in rural areas. A study sponsored by the Land Tenure Committee of the Department of Church in Town and Country of the National Council of Churches has been summarized in Town and Country Churches and Family Farming by Marshall Harris and Joseph Ackerman. The study deals with helping farm people to own family farms under economically and socially sound conditions; the role of the church and local, state, and federal Government in improving the conditions under which farm families hold land; helping

people to live creatively on the land; how farm people may use their farms for security in old age yet transfer them fully conserved, properly improved, and adequately equipped as a legacy to the next generation; and how farm policy and improvement programs can strengthen community institutions.

In 1947 the National Catholic Rural Life Conference held a study conference on the family, church and environment. It prepared a discussion guide outline for use in local parishes designed to help people think through ways of strengthening families, religion, community life and the democratic heritage. The National Catholic Rural Life Conference continues to express its concern for the farm family and rural life in various ways.

Understanding the role of the family farm is basic to helpfing youth deal forthrightly with the changing rural environment. Only about 10 out of every 100 male youth now on farms can expect to find a satisfactory future in family farming. The others will need to move out of the rural community or move into the rural non-farm sector of the rural population. This rural non-farm sector of the population has also received the special attention of the church. The National Lutheran Council in 1961 sponsored a conference on the church's concern for non-farm people in town and country communities. The conference findings, edited by George Van Horn, are reported in the book, New Thousands in Town and Country, Concern of the Church.

Such conferences and reports are designed to help congregations and pastors use the information and insights in developing their parish programs. While the materials may or may not single out rural youth specifically they describe the socio-economic climate to help the church minister to rural youth as an integral part of the congregation and the community.

YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

The church recognizes the value of the contribution which civic youth organizations are making to rural youth. Various church bodies have developed special programs to encourage the youth of their congregations to derive maximum benefit from participation in both the youth programs of the church and the civic youth organizations. The religious bodies encourage youth to participate in the programs of their local congregations for religious instruction, worship, and fellowship. But the religious bodies also encourage their youth to participate in civic youth organizations for the opportunity of learning and for the opportunity of serving God in the community.

The Jewish faith has developed the Menorah Award program for Jewish girls who are active in Girl Scouts. Protestant Girl Scouts may earn a God and Community Award which has been developed by the United Church Women of Ohio.

The Roman Catholic Church has developed a Marian Award program for its Girl Scouts and a God-Home-Country Award program for its 4-H Club members. The Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and some other Protestant church bodies have developed a Pro Deo et Patria (For God and Country) Award program for Boy Scouts of their respective denominations.

In the Lutheran God-Home-Country Program a youth of the Lutheran Church may be a participant in Camp Fire Girls, 4-H, Future Farmers of America, Future Homemakers of America or Girl Scouts. A growth booklet provides a guide for youth, youth counselor, pastor, and civic youth organization leader for the development of knowledge and skills.

These special youth programs contribute to coordination in the use of church and community resources for the youth. They are also available in both urban and rural areas.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

As institutions within communities, congregations are inextricably involved with their communities. The church is concerned that communities be developed as wholesome places in which to live. The church is concerned that the social, as well as the economic, aspect of community life be developed.

The church undergirds community development in several ways. It helps to develop constructive attitudes. It communicates the concept of stewardship of human and natural resources. It has been found to be a developer of leadership for its own purposes but this leadership can and does contribute to community development.

In the average community there are many organizations engaged in worthwhile activities, but too often each tends to proceed as though it were the only group concerned with community improvement. The community development approach that is being encouraged is the coordination of the efforts of the various organizations. The church encourages the Rural Areas Development (RAD) approach which emphasizes the importance of representation by all organizations of the community.

Responses to the survey for this paper indicate that one-half of the denominations encourages their congregations to participate in Rural Areas Development (RAD) at the community and at the county levels. Church leaders of major denominations serve on committees for Rural Areas Development at both the national and the state levels.

The efforts of congregations to help in the development of their communities and the efforts of church leaders to encourage congregations to participate in community development are ways in which the church helps to meet needs of rural youth.

SUMMARY

To make its distinctive contribution to rural youth in a changing environment, the church seeks to fulfill the purpose for which it is called into being--to communicate the message entrusted to it.

To do this it is necessary that the church be conversant with the realities of society. Social scientists provide facts and insights concerning society. The church employ study and communication processes in order to make use of the facts and insights through its basic units, the congregations. It also studies itself. As a part of society the church seeks to undergird the human community.

FOOTNOTES

1. Religious Responsibility for the Social Order, A Symposium by Three Theologians, New York, National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1962, p. 12.

2. Ibid., p. 11.

3. Ibid., p. 7f.

4. Report of the Commission on Country Life, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, The University of North Carolina Press, 1911, p. 137f.

5. "Continuing Education for Town and Country Pastors at Land-grant Universities," Federal Extension Service, USDA, June 1962, p. 1.

6. Strommen, Merton P. Profiles of Church Youth, St. Louis, Missouri; Concordia Publishing House, 1963, p. 44.

7. Ibid., p. 196.

8. Ibid., p. 199